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DEHORNING COWS.



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DEHORNING COWS.

G. M. GOWELL AND F. L. RUSSELL.

In this country dehorning of cattle has been practiced to a considerable extent for about ten years and in England for a longer time. At first the methods used were very crude. The animal had to be closely confined and the horns were removed with a saw, which required considerable time and must have been very painful to the animal. Occasionally even now horns are removed with a saw but the common practice is to use specially constructed clippers, which do the work better in every way. Almost no apparatus is required to confine the animals and one stroke of the clippers removes a horn, frequently in a single second of time and with comparatively little pain. The operation has become so simple, that, in view of the very manifest advantages resulting from it, it is not strange that it is coming to be very generally adopted. Horns are no longer needed by cattle as weapons of defence against natural enemies and serve no good purpose.

EXPERT OPINION OF DEHORNING.

Dehorning is practiced at several experiment stations in this country and the published results indicate that the pain suffered by the animals is not to be compared with injuries which cattle inflict on each other with their horns. The Texas Station finds "that a drove of the wildest dehorned cattle may run loose together in a building like a flock of sheep, and they will fatten faster after dehorning than before."

In Bulletin 54 of the Cornell Station, Professor Roberts gives quite a full account of the history of dehorning. He says it has been found to be of great practical utility in rendering animals more docile and quiet, in rendering them much less capable of injuring each other or mankind, and in reducing the space necessary for safe housing and shipping.

The following is quoted from the above named bulletin: "In Canada the Ontario government appointed a commission 'To obtain the fullest information in reference to the practice recently introduced into this province of dehorning cattle, and to make full inquiry into and report the reasons for and against the practice.'

"Evidence was received from the representatives of all the interests affected by the practice, including farmers, dairymen, drovers, exporters, wholesale and retail butchers, cattle market attendants, tanners, hide merchants, veterinary surgeons, medical practitioners and members of humane societies,—ninety-eight in all.

"Of the farmers examined, nearly seventy in number, all who had either performed or seen the operation performed, with three or four exceptions, were strongly in favor of it, the majority stating that they were prejudiced against it on the grounds of cruelty until they gained a practical knowledge of it. Of the farmers opposed to the practice, not more than three or four had ever seen the operation, but they thought it cruel and unnecessary.

"Evidence as to the loss caused by animals using their horns upon each other was given by cattle buyers and others in frequent attendance at the cattle market, and also by butchers and tanners.

"Among veterinary surgeons a considerable conflict of opinion was found to exist. As in the case of the farmers, those who had seen the operation and observed its effects were in favor of it, while those who had not seen it were opposed to it.

"Indeed, as regards all the evidence received by the commission, it might almost be given as the rule that where the operation was properly and skillfully performed, those witnessing it, however prejudiced before, became converts to it, while the great bulk of the opposition came from parties not acquainted with the operation, and who entertained exaggerated ideas as to its severity.

"In no case were witnesses able to refer to an instance where a farmer was dissatisfied with the results or willing to give up his right to continue the practice, after having performed the operation.

"In addition to the evidence as to the amount of pain involved in the operation, much evidence was received as to the commercial advantages accruing from the operation, and emphasizing the point that a great deal of suffering is prevented by the removal of the horns."

As a result of the inquiry the commission unanimously recommended that the practice of dehorning be permitted and encouraged.

DEHORNING AT THE MAINE STATION.

Part of the Station herd were hornless; the remainder were dehorned to secure a greater degree of quiet among the animals when all alike were dehorned, and to lessen the danger of injury to each other and the attendants.

While the Station has never lost an animal from goring, we have at several different times had animals severely injured, and not a season passes but some of the herd are marked by the sharp horns of their companions. In winter, when the animals are turned into the yards for exercise, their exuberance of spirits and love of frolic sometimes carry them so far as to cause them to chastise each other severely. The most serious trouble occurs during fly time when animals, desperate from the annoyance of the winged pests, rush among their mates, hooking right and left, and showing no mercy in their momentary frenzy.

For the last three years the calves born in the Station herd have been dehorned when young by the use of caustic potash. The dehorning has been done as soon as the buttons could be felt, and not later than twenty days from birth. Calves dehorned at this age have never yet shown any horns. One, dehorned when thirty-five days old, developed dwarfed horns an inch or an inch and a half long.

Dehorning with potash is done by clipping the hair away from around the buttons, moistening the end of the potash slightly, and rubbing one embryo horn for four or five seconds, then moistening the potash again and rubbing the other horn in the same manner. Each horn should be thus treated four or five times. Four or five minutes time is required in dehorning a calf. Care should be taken not to have too much moisture about the potash as it might spread and remove the hair from too large a surface. The calf should be kept from getting wet dur-

ing the next few days for the same reason. Healing soon follows the operation and smooth polls have resulted in every case except the one mentioned as having been done at too late an age.

The eleventh of last June, all of the cows in the herd with horns were dehorned. All the wounds bled at the time of the operation. Two bled considerably for about an hour and slightly for another hour, but no animal gave evidence of suffering from loss of blood. The operation was evidently painful to the animals. The period of pain appeared to be limited to the time when the clipper was in process of closing, which was at most but a few seconds in each case. After being released the animals went about the paddock as usual, and an hour or two later, when they were put into the barn, they ate their dinner as though nothing unusual had taken place.

The milk yield showed no appreciable decrease, even on the days immediately following the operation. As it was not intended, at the time, to prepare a bulletin upon the subject, the daily milk records were destroyed after being credited upon the monthly account, consequently they cannot be presented here.

On page 7 are presented the monthly milk and fat yields of all the cows from May to August, inclusive, that the reader may have the data relative to the thrift and condition of the animals since the operation. As will be seen in the table, most of the animals were well advanced in the period of lactation. The shrinkage in milk flow and butter yield is for the most part less than would be usually expected from advancement in period of lactation. The dehorning apparently had no effect upon either milk flow or yield of butter fat.

Our experience is in accord with that elsewhere. The Minnesota Station compared the yield of milk and butter fat of nine cows for three milkings before dehorning with the yield of the same cows for three milkings after dehorning. A very slight decrease was noticed. That even this small decrease was due to other causes than dehorning is indicated from the fact that the relative decrease in the milk and fat yield was greater in the case of six cows that were not dehorned.

In Bulletin No. 37 of the Cornell Experiment Station the statement is made that with an experience of six or seven years

in dehorning, although the operation has usually been performed by inexperienced persons, no ill effects have followed. A comparison of the milk yield of five dehorned cows and seven cows not dehorned indicates that the dehorning did not reduce the yield.

Yields of milk and butter fat for two months before and two months after dehorning, and for the month of June in which the cows were dehorned.

	Breed.	Age— years.	Months since last calf.	Months till due to calve.	April—lbs.	May—lbs.	June—lbs.	July—lbs.	August—lbs.
LOBLITOP	Jersey	9	9	4					
Milk yield					637	672	713	643	559
Butter fat					27.4	28.2	34.2	30.9	26.3
ROSE	Jersey	10	9	5					
Milk yield					584	598	587	567	555
Butter fat					28.7	23.9	28.7	26.7	26.7
ADDIE S.	Jersey	8	9	4					
Milk yield					464	452	465	262	163
Butter fat					23.2	18.1	23.3	12.3	3.1
HOPE	Jersey	6	8	4					
Milk yield					399	400	343	334	293
Butter fat					21.6	20.8	18.8	18.4	16.8
TULIP	Jersey	6	5	7					
Milk yield					826	789	759	696	640
Butter fat					45.5	39.4	42.5	34.6	32.0
RUTH	Jersey	5	8	6					
Milk yield					567	577	582	534	472
Butter fat					26.1	28.3	30.8	33.7	26.4
PANSY	Jersey	7	3	10					
Milk yield					268	719	673	644	645
Butter fat					9.4	25.2	33.6	30.9	33.5
ORLETTA	Jersey	10	8	5					
Milk yield					522	560	552	502	420
Butter fat					25.6	25.8	26.5	26.1	23.5
LOTTY	Jersey	4	13	5					
Milk yield					236	237	236	198	120
Butter fat					10.4	13.2	13.0	11.5	7.1
DUDLEY	Jersey	7	19	*					
Milk yield					487	485	355	19	720
Butter fat					24.9	24.3	19.2	.7	28.8
TURNER	Jersey	8	7	5					
Milk yield					531	563	543	453	401
Butter fat					22.3	23.7	23.9	21.7	18.5
ADLE	Jersey	5	2	10					
Milk yield					56	653	709	676	682
Butter fat					4.2	33.3	41.1	36.5	38.2
LOTTIE	Jersey	10	8	†					
Milk yield					548	546	554	516	579
Butter fat					31.7	30.6	32.1	28.9	31.9
MADALINE	Jersey	9	3	10					
Milk yield					1,108	975	879	840	825
Butter fat					46.6	41.0	35.0	33.6	31.3
HUNTON	Holstein	9	4	†					
Milk yield					513	972	880	846	798
Butter fat					18.0	33.0	35.2	33.9	33.5
FATAMIE	Holstein	9	3	†					
Milk yield					1,095	926	765	812	852
Butter fat					38.3	31.4	26.0	29.2	30.7
DUPLICATE	Jersey	2	3	†					
Milk yield					513	486	455	432	378
Butter fat					23.6	25.3	21.8	20.3	18.5

* Calved July 27, 1897.

† Not with calf.

CONCLUSIONS IN REGARD TO DEHORNING CATTLE.

1. Dehorning is to be recommended because dehorned cattle are more easily cared for than those with horns, and because dehorned cattle enjoy life better. "A great deal of suffering is prevented by the removal of horns."

2. The best time to dehorn cattle is during cold weather when there will be no trouble from flies.

3. To dehorn mature animals, clippers should be used that will remove the horn perfectly at a single stroke and in a moment of time.

4. With suitable clippers properly used, the operation is simple and very quickly performed.

5. When it is skilfully performed, animals do not give evidence of great suffering as an effect of dehorning. The tissues injured in dehorning are not very well supplied with nerves and they are quickly cut through. Good evidence that dehorning is not very painful is the fact that cattle will resume feeding immediately after being operated on, and the yield of milk in cows is not perceptibly affected. Compared with castration of colts and calves, dehorning may be considered painless.

6. Those who are familiar with the operation of dehorning and the results of it are its most enthusiastic advocates.

7. To prevent the growth of horns, calves under three weeks of age can have the embryo horns removed with one stroke of a sharp knife, or they can be treated with a caustic sufficiently powerful to destroy them.

8. In the past, efforts have frequently been made to prevent the practice of dehorning on the ground that it caused needless pain. It would seem to us that efforts can now better be expended by endeavoring to have the last relic of a horn removed from our domestic cattle, who ceased to need them when they came under the protection of man. Horns may sometimes be ornamental, but it is evident that they are usually useless, expensive and dangerous luxuries.